

Was Pres. Shonts (The New York) "Vamped"

How "My Friend Amanda Thomas," Chorus Girl, Twice Married and Divorced, Won the Old Millionaire's Affection and Turns Up With a "Will" That Gives Her His Estate

ACTRESS TO HAVE BATTLE OF SMART MODE EXPERTS.
Jeanne Caskie Will Bitterly Contest Claims of London Dressmakers—T

Elfie Fay, a chorus girl in the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" show, who made an unexpected spectacular "hit" on the opening night of the piece.



Show girl photograph of Jeanne Caskie (Mrs. Amanda Thomas), who was known at the time as "Red Top"—and—

Fac-simile of newspaper reports about the \$20-a-week chorus girl and her trips to Europe and gorgeous clothes.

JEANNE CASKIE TO SUE FOR DIVORCE
Went to Paris for Costume, Left Detective Watching

CHAPTER XVI.

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 (Continued from Last Sunday)

THE widow of Theodore P. Shonts asks the courts to compel Mrs. Amanda C. Thomas to pay her one million dollars for taking Shonts's love and millions away from her. And when that case comes to trial Amanda Thomas will be asked to explain many things.

How much did "my friend Amanda" get out of Shonts? Just when did the old traction magnate begin paying Amanda's bills?

Mrs. Shonts asserts and Mrs. Thomas admits that Amanda first met Shonts in 1906.

Mrs. Shonts swears that Shonts at once began paying attentions to Amanda—right along through the years 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911; getting in deeper and deeper until Shonts died in 1919.

But Mrs. Thomas swears that although she met Shonts for the first time in 1906, she didn't see him again until one day early in 1908, and didn't come to really intimately associate with him until late in 1908.

If that is so, then who was paying the Thomas woman's bills for quite a period—between the time Mr. Thomas, her husband, lost his money and Shonts, who wasn't her husband, took up the load? Where did the money come from to pay Amanda's bills?

Mrs. Thomas lived and lived luxuriously and had a companion and servants and a governess for her son Herbert and a fine outfit of clothes—but her husband, Mr. Thomas, certainly did not pay for any of it. Who did?

And this brings up another rather similar episode in Amanda's earlier career—at another period of her life, when, separated from her first husband, she managed to find funds to travel to Europe and buy "trunks loaded with dazzling gowns," according to the newspaper reports of that time.

When Amanda came to New York, in 1898, she was looking for a job, and her wardrobe was very limited. Her chorus girl salary was \$20 a week, and in 1900, when she met Herbert Thomas, she was separated from Yeager, her husband—and yet she was beginning to wear clothes that attracted attention. And she went to Europe and stocked up with such a wardrobe that it caused comment. How did the thrifty chorus girl manage to do it?

In February 1901, a New York newspaper had this to say:

"Miss Jeanne Caskie says she allowed the matrimonial reins to slacken a little (over her husband, Walter Yeager) while in Paris selecting gowns with which to dazzle her American admirers. She was not quite satisfied with the way her clothes were made in New York, and as

she had plenty of money she made a trip to Paris last fall and was fitted with fashionable costumes.

"She returned in December with her trunks loaded with dazzling gowns, but says she had reason to suspect her husband of inconstancy while she was away, so engaged detectives to watch him. Much to her sorrow, she says, her suspicions proved correct, and soon afterward she made application for a divorce, and the suit will be tried within the next two weeks."

Amanda was separated from Yeager, who hadn't much money anyway—did her savings from that \$20 chorus girl's salary pay her trip abroad and fill those "trunks loaded with dazzling gowns"? Where did the chorus girl get the money to go to Europe and load her trunk with dazzling gowns? Not from her husband, Yeager, the \$30-a-week clerk. Not from Shonts, because Amanda had not yet met him.

In March another New York paper reveals this little echo of Amanda's trip to Europe:

"Jeanne Caskie, who is to support Mamie Gilroy in 'My Sweetheart,' is one of the best dressed women on the stage, and will seek to prove this in her defense of a suit brought against her by Paquin & Co., of London, to reopen which Judge Fitzgerald grants an order. While in England last summer Miss Caskie ordered a dress and a dinner gown from the modistes. When sent to her she refused to accept them, contending that they did not fit. 'She avers that Paquin & Co. promised to make the necessary alterations so as to make them fit, but up to

"**I**F THE wronged wife is finally robbed and the other woman gets this money, will not the tendency be for every weak girl in the city to ask herself the question, 'If she did these things and got away with it and now flourishes, why may not I?'"

These words are from the recent sermon of the Rev. Dr. Stratton, and he was pointing to the moral lesson of the double life of the late Theodore P. Shonts and his "friend" Amanda C. Thomas.

Will Mrs. Thomas "get away with it?" The courts of New York have already begun to answer that question. Here is what the Judges of the Appellate Court say about the extraordinary "last will":

"At most it was an alleged will, assailed as the ineffectual testamentary effort of an enfeebled mind, governed and controlled by undue and sinister influence, and, therefore, incapable of probate as the will of the deceased."

And in her million-dollar damage suit Mrs. Shonts, the widow, would like to ask "my friend Amanda" many questions. The Shonts millions have vanished—how much of them did Mrs. Thomas get?

For years Mrs. Thomas, though still the wife of Mr. Thomas, received not a dollar from her husband; and yet Amanda lived, and lived well, with plenty of servants, magnificent clothes, money for travel abroad. As St. Matthew said of clothes and of the lilies:

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Mrs. Shonts is endeavoring to find out if Shonts's money provided Amanda's raiment and paid her expenses, though Amanda toiled not.

October, when Miss Caskie left England, they were not ready. Suit was brought by them in the City Court and judgment was given by default against the actress for \$427."

And again a month later, on April 7, 1901, a New York newspaper prints this:

"After a brief but stormy voyage upon the matrimonial sea Jeanne Caskie, whom her friends aver is the best dressed woman on the stage, is free to make another attempt if she so desires. Yesterday Judge MacLean, of the Supreme Court, granted her a decree of divorce against her husband, Walter Yeager, the theatrical man."

How did she do it—"plenty of money," "gowns to dazzle her admirers," "trunks loaded with gowns," "best dressed woman on the stage"—how did she do it on her \$20-a-week salary?

Not Yeager. Not Shonts. Then who was putting up for Amanda?

In February, 1900, a musical comedy company with a bunch of chorus girls came to Boston and opened at the Columbia Theatre. It was called the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" company. Among the chorus was a big girl with red hair who was known as "Red Top." This was Miss Jeanne Caskie (at that time the wife of Walter Yeager, a \$30-a-week clerk).

That musical comedy was a failure, but, incidentally, it profoundly influenced the lives of many people. The big red-headed chorus girl started something during the brief New England engagements of that road show which eventually left a trail all over America, across the ocean, through Europe and back again—and the end is not yet. Here is a reminiscent statement by one who knew the members of that company and watched with interest the big red-headed chorus girl and the young high school boy, the millionaire's son, she met and married—19-year-old Herbert F. Thomas. The statement follows:

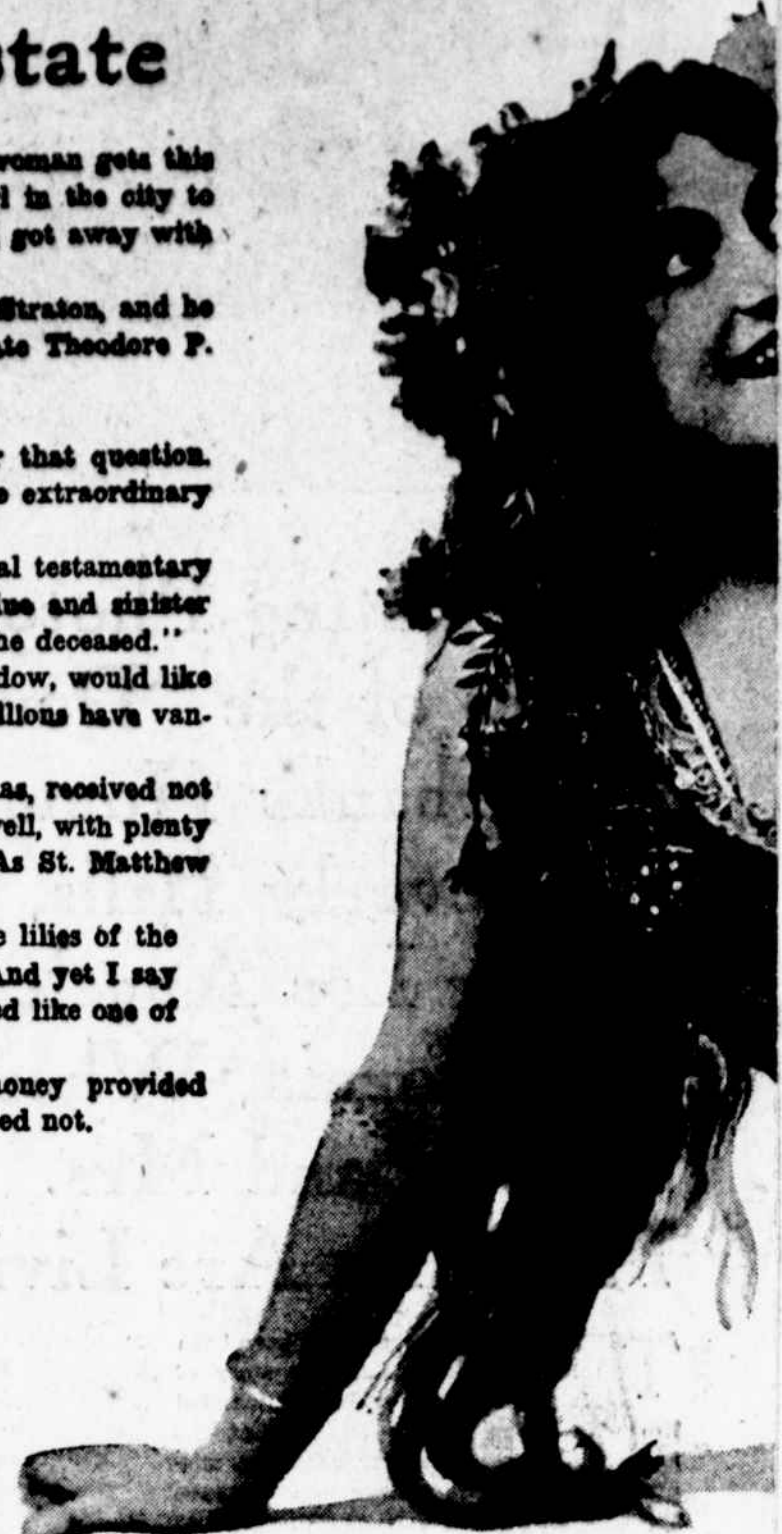
It was, if I recall correctly, the week beginning February 12, 1900, when the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" company made its first appearance on any stage at the Columbia Theatre, in Boston. It was a three-act musical comedy written, I think, by Richard Carle, the comedian. It was the old-fashioned style of show which carried a very jolly bunch of chorus girls.

The complete cast of this company was as follows:
 Lord Bobby Belford..... Will Armstrong
 Fitzroy Cavendish..... Etienne Girardot
 The MacGregor..... G. C. Boniface, Jr.
 Norah Snuffles..... Charles Danby
 Rev. Jonathan Job Mecham..... Richard Carle
 Julius Ippic..... Snitz Edwards
 Lady Janet Belford..... Marguerita Sylva
 Mrs. Snuffles..... Mrs. McKee Rankin
 Hester Wright..... Maude Creighton
 Sallie Seltzer..... Rose Beaumont
 Sadie Seltzer..... Nellie Beaumont
 Honora Hawkins..... Paula Edwards
 Pierre..... Hattie Delaro

CHORUS.

Miss Behave..... Georgia Carhart
 Miss Chance..... Marjorie Relyea
 Miss Hap..... Madge Dean
 Miss Fortune..... Elaine Selover
 Miss Print..... Elfie Fay
 Miss Judge..... JEAN CASKIE
 Miss Lay..... Lucille Verna
 Miss Construe..... Rose Clarke

There were some excellent actors and actresses in that company—Richard Carle, Marguerita Sylva, the Beaumont sisters, Paula Edwards and others—a really very good cast of characters and a very attractive bunch in the chorus.



Marguerita Sylva, one of the leading people in merry "Mam'selle 'Awkins" musical comedy

Jeanne Caskie, one of the eight chorus girls, was listed on the programme as "Miss Judge."

Two things happened. On the opening night a pretty, clever, but unknown little chorus girl, Miss Elfie Fay, made a surprising hit and then and there laid the foundation of a future career as a well known stage person. This is what one of the Boston papers said the morning after the first performance:

"The big individual hit of the evening was made by a pretty little girl who was billed in the chorus, and who assisted in all the ensemble work, but who was given permission to exaggerate all that she did. She took full advantage of the chance. Her antics in swell costumes, her remarkable share in a cakewalk, and her grotesquerie created a furor. She was recalled in the second act, and the audience wildly cheered her. A bigger hit has not been made here in many seasons. Doubtless many in the audience left the theatre trying to guess who she was, as the programme gave no indication. She is the talented daughter of Hugh Fay, long a partner of Billy Barry."

The other thing that happened was much more important, but was not suspected at the time as being of any importance. It was the meeting of one of the chorus girls, Jeanne Caskie, with a high school boy, Herbert F. Thomas. The Caskie girl was at that time a married woman, with a husband living in New York.

In February 1900, Young Thomas was not quite nineteen years old. Thomas was the son of the rich banker Orlando F. Thomas, and he had been sent to a well-known college preparatory school just outside of Boston.

The boy had more money than years of discretion and with a well filled pocketbook he came into Boston to visit the theatres and meet some of the actresses for a supper after the show. My business at this time brought me into relationship with theatrical people and I also became well acquainted with Herbert Thomas.

A day or so after the "Mam'selle 'Awkins" show opened young Thomas came in from school and called at my place of business with a friend. Knowing my business relations with the theatrical world he asked if I knew any of the girls with the 'Awkins company and, if so, could I arrange for him to meet any of them.

It was quite the thing at that time for young men with money to meet the chorus girls of the traveling shows at Reynolds Cafe. There was many a gay party at this well-known night life gathering place. I invited Thomas and his friend to meet me at the cafe that night where I already had a supper engagement with one of the principal characters in the piece. At the table that night were several members of the company and when young Thomas came up I invited him to join us and presented him to Elfie Fay and one or two other girls. The party broke up very late. There was much champagne, a large part of which Thomas cheerfully paid for. There were other